

Benvenuto di Giovanni, 1436-before 1517
Christ in Limbo

**KRESS CATALOGUE NUMBER**

K1647C

IDENTIFIER

519

ARTIST

Benvenuto di Giovanni, 1436-before 1517

NATIONALITY

Italian

DATE

probably 1491

MEDIUM

tempera on panel

TYPE OF OBJECT

Painting

DIMENSIONS

painted surface: 42.1 x 46.6 cm (16 9/16 x 18 3/8 in)

LOCATION

National Gallery of Art, Washington, District of Columbia

PROVENANCE

Luigi de Angelis [1758-1832, custodian of the Siena Library from 1812], Siena, by 1824. [1] Acquired 1875 through Sir John Charles Robinson [1824-1913], London, by Sir Francis Cook, 1st bt. [1817-1901], Doughty House, Richmond, Surrey; [2] by inheritance to his son, Sir Frederick Lucas Cook, 2nd bt. [1844-1920], Doughty House; by inheritance to his son, Sir Herbert Frederick Cook, 3rd bt. [1868-1939], Doughty House; by inheritance to his son, Sir Francis Ferdinand Maurice Cook, 4th bt. [1907-1978], Doughty House, and Cothay Manor, Somerset; sold April 1946 to (Francis A. Drey, London). [3] (Wildenstein & Co., New York); purchased June 1949 by the Samuel H. Kress Collection, New York; [4] gift 1952 to NGA. [1] According to a handwritten note of that date by the abbot De Angelis in the Archives of the Uffizi (De Angelis, folio 337r.). The note first describes in detail the altarpiece *Ascension of Christ* (Pinacoteca Nazionale, Siena, no. 434) that was originally in the atrium of the sacristy of the monastery of Sant'Eugenio near Siena, and from there moved to Siena to the city's old university called the Sapienza. De Angelis continues: "In my modest possession are four little pictures two thirds of a *braccio* high and one and one-sixth *braccio* wide, with lovely little figures, which could easily be mistaken for the work of Mantegna. One very crowded with figures represents the capture in the garden, one the

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crucifixion, the third the resurrection and the fourth, painted with great skill, is the descent into Limbo. All four are by Benvenuto." He does not state it explicitly, but it is very probable that De Angelis knew the provenance of these paintings and the fact that they originally belonged with the *Ascension of Christ* by Benvenuto, which at least since 1768 was missing its predella (see Guglielmo Della Valle (*Lettere sanesi...sopra le belle arti*, vol. 3, Rome, 1786: 44). Probably at the time the altarpiece was moved from the church the predella, as was customary, was divided into "little pictures" distributed among the monks' cells. The NGA paintings 1952.5.52-.55 would then be purchased from the monastery, probably already framed together (as suggested by the wrong order in which they are described by De Angelis), in the same form they would have when illustrated in the catalogue of the Cook collection (see note 2). Luigi De Angelis (on whom see Ubaldo Cagliaritano, *Mamma Siena*, Siena, 1971: 523) was entrusted with gathering and reordering the works of art belonging to the suppressed religious orders and thus with creating what was to become the Pinacoteca Nazionale in Siena. It is not known what happened to his own collection after his death. [2] See Tancred Borenius, *A Catalogue of the Paintings in the Collection of Sir Frederick Cook, Bt.*, 3 vols., London, 1913: 1: no. 6. [3] See copy of correspondence in NGA curatorial files, from the Cook Collection Archive in care of John Somerville, England. There is no record of who purchased NGA 1952.5.52-.55 from Drey. See Fern Rusk Shapley, *Catalogue of the Italian Paintings*, 2 vols., Washington, D.C., 1979: 67 n. 7, in which she states: "Dr. Paul Drey wrote to the National Gallery in a letter of Sept. 20, 1946: 'All four panels were sold by Sir Francis [Ferdinand Maurice] Cook [4th bt.]; since then they have been sold again and, to my regret, the present owner does not want to have his name known.'" The Wildenstein invoice (see note 4) lists only all four Cook family owners. [4] The four paintings were with Wildenstein & Co. by at least February 1949, when John Walker saw them (see his 28 February 1949 letter to George Wildenstein, copy in NGA curatorial files). The Wildenstein invoice to the Kress Foundation for 16 items, including the predella paintings, is dated 23 June 1949 (copy in NGA curatorial files).

ACCESSION NUMBER

1952.5.54

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LEGACY NGA NUMBER

1133

1 ACQUISITION

Wildenstein and Company, June 23, 1949

1 DISTRIBUTION

Gift to National Gallery of Art, October 15, 1952

EXTERNAL LINKS

Related Collection Record

<https://www.nga.gov/collection/art-object-page.41669.html>

Related National Gallery of Art Library Image Collections Record

https://library.nga.gov/permalink/01NGA_INST/1p5jkvq/alma99983973804896

Related National Gallery of Art Systematic Catalog

https://library.nga.gov/permalink/01NGA_INST/1cl1g8d/alma992014793504896

5 ARCHIVAL ITEMS

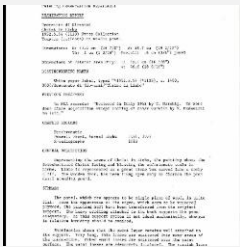


K1647C - Condition and restoration record, circa 1950s-1960s

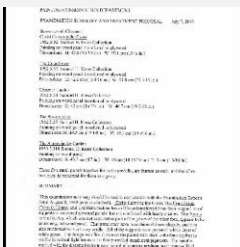
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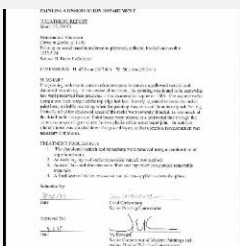
K1647A - Condition and restoration record, circa 1950s-1960s



K1647C - Examination summary, 1985



K1647C - Examination summary and treatment proposal, 2010



K1647C - Treatment report, 2013

RECORD LINK

<https://kress.nga.gov/Detail/objects/519>